The Department of Music
of
The University of Alberta

presents

EXPLORATIONS

Sunday, November 26, 1972, at 8:30 p.m.

Convocation Hall, Arts Building

FESTINO NELLA SERA DEL GIOVEDÌ GRASSO AVANTI CENA (1608) ..... Adriano Banchieri

(Festival in the Evening of Fat Thursday before the Supper)

The Chamber Choir of the Concert Choir

Sigrid E. Albert, Beth Atkinson, Nancy Browne, Avaleigh Crockett, Bonnie-Jean Dobek, Sharon Goller, Barbara-Lynn Goodwin, Deb Klapauszak, Jean Loree, Mary McDevitt, Susan Prime, Rita Smyth, Judith Wiens, David Goodwin, Glen Guebert, Mel Otke, John Shandro, Don Skinner, Roger Tripp

David Stocker, conductor

CANZONA NO. 28 from 36 Canzoni (1608) ..... Giovanni Gabrieli

Christopher Morrison, Wendy Grasdal, Daniel Otteson, Tom Smyth, trumpets
Bill Gilday, Eileen Keown, Blyth Nuttall, trombones
Chris Taylor, bass trombone
Malcolm Forsyth, conductor

SONATA SOPRA SANCTA MARIA ORA PRO NOBIS from the Marian Vespers of 1610 ..... Claudio Monteverdi

Christopher Morrison, Wendy Grasdal, Daniel Otteson, Tom Smyth, trumpets
Bill Gilday, Eileen Keown, Blyth Nuttall, trombones
Chris Taylor, bass trombone
Henry Vant Erve, tuba
Women of the Concert Choir
Malcolm Forsyth, conductor

CHÔROS NO. 4 for Three Horns and Trombone (1926) ..... Heitor Villa-Lobos

John Iltis, David Hoyt, Avaleigh Crockett, horns
Malcolm Forsyth, trombone

INTERMISSION

CANTATA SACRA (1966) ..... Violet Archer

Preludium, — Deo Gratias
The Annunciation, — Interludium; Ave Maria
The Nativity, — Christe qui lux es et dies
The Passion, — Interludium; Planctus Crucis; Crucifixus
The Resurrection and Ascension, — Gloria tibi Domine

Soprano — Jacqueline Preuss (The Christ Child)
Contralto — Andrea Mellis (Mary)
Tenor — Jean Letourneau (Gabriel)
Baritones — Bernard Turgeon (Christ)
George Cotton
Bass — Franklyn Giffen (Man)
Flute — Joan Pecover
Clarinet — Ernest Dalwood
Horn — David Hoyt
Trumpet — Ed Nixon
Violin — Thomas Rolston
Viola — Nicholas Pulos
Cello — Cheryll Melott
Double bass — Roy Armitage
Piano — Kathleen Letourneau

Alfred Strombergs, conductor

Next concert in this series: Sunday, January 21, at 8:30 p.m. — Lieder and Songs, accompanied by various instrumental combinations; Two Poèmes, Op. 32, and Sonata No. 4 in F sharp major, Op. 30, for solo piano by Scriabin; Brahms' Trio No. 2 in C major, Op. 87, for piano, violin and violoncello.

PROGRAM NOTES

The first three works to be heard tonight all issue from Italy around the turn into the seventeenth century, when conventions of Renaissance musical style had reached a point of sophistication often referred to as "Mannerism". Festino nella sera del giovedì grasso avanti cena (Festival in the Evening of Fat Thursday before the Supper) was printed in 1608 as Banchieri's third book of madrigals for five voices. Although Banchieri was associated with a monastery near Bologna for most of his life and wrote important sacred music and theoretical treatises, he is noted today chiefly for his madrigal comedies, of which Festino is the best known. The naiveté and burlesque eccentricity of the sets of madrigals grouped together as madrigal comedies seem to have been a purposeful foil for the extreme emotionalism and sensitivity of serious Italian madrigals. Madrigal comedies are tied together by a dramatic theme, although the character vignettes and broadly humorous incidents portrayed in the text are only loosely related.

Banchieri prefaces Festino with a printed foreword in which an allegorical character "Modern Delight" states: "Gentlemen, let me leave you with this final cadence: let your singing be merry, . . . and as long as this sort of music pleases most of you, let all considerations for the rest be set aside." This hedonistic attitude carries over into the sung Introduction, In which young lovers are to enter "in good spirits, before dinner, with jokes, masquerades, ballets." Humor in the ensuing madrigals derives from pattering on nonsense syllables, parodies of Italian dialects (as in No. 2, the giustiniana supposed to imitate the stuttering of a Venetian), and other stock devices such as the appearance of characters from the Italian commedia dell' arte. The height of buffoonery is reached in the Contrappunto bestiale, in which a bestiary of cuckoo, owl, cat, and dog in the four upper voices ridicules the academic techniques of church music, heard in the bass voice singing a parody of the cantus firmus tunes (usually derived from plainchant) underlying much sacred vocal polyphony. The intentional crudities and distortions of Festino evidence only one way in which musical style of the Renaissance had developed to a point of Mannerism.

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The career of Giovanni Gabrieli (1557-1612) was centered around the Cathedral of St. Mark in Venice. Since the Middle Ages, St. Mark's had been the treasure house of an opulent Venice, and its visual splendor during the halcyon days of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was matched by the aural sumptuousness of music produced for ceremonies held there. In addition to reflecting the general magnificence of the setting, much of the music composed for St. Mark's was conceived to take advantage of resonant acoustics that enriched the sonority of vocal and instrumental ensembles placed in the numerous surrounding galleries inside the cathedral.

Gabrieli was especially famed as a composer of instrumental music, and he favored the varied sonorities of wind instruments in preference to the more homogeneous consorts of viols. The canzona was a genre of instrumental music derived from Franco-Flemish chansons. In the canzona heard tonight, Gabrieli has divided the ensemble into two antiphonal groups of four, placed in different locations so as to give a spatial dimension to the dialogue between the two groups. The sections of the piece present varying textures, themes, and tempos, adding to the contrast afforded by dividing the sources of sound. Such musical structure is especially appropriate to the brilliance of modern brass instruments, even though the sound of the ensemble used in Gabrieli's time would have been composed of more varied and less powerful instruments.

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The Sonata on "Sancta Maria ora pro nobis" is part of Monteverdi's Marian Vespers of 1610, composed on a liturgical text but incorporating certain anomalies of style and form that make the work problematical for use as religious service music. From 1613 until his death in 1643, Monteverdi was director of music at St. Mark's, the most prestigious post in Catholic church music. Although his greatest musical innovations were carried out in the field of opera and other secular music, he tried with notable success in his sacred music to combine concertato writing (using elaborate combinations of solo voices, choruses, and instruments) with the traditional cantus firmus technique of basing polyphonic music on a plainsong melody.

The term "sonata" at this time bore no definite implications as to formal design, but rather was used as a general descriptive term for a piece to be played rather than sung. Like the preceding Gabrieli canzona, the sonata from the Vespers was written for an ensemble of diverse instruments and is a succession of contrasting sections, some chordal and some contrapuntal, some dance-like and some more sober in character. The opening section is repeated in altered form at the end of the piece. The concerted contrast of the differing musical sections and instrumental sonorities is offset by the constant reiteration of the liturgical cantus firmus by a unison treble chorus, singing the litany chant "Sancta Maria ora pro nobis." Monteverdi, like so many other consummate masters of music, seems to have been stimulated by the problems of reconciling divergent elements, represented here by the instruments and voices. However, Monteverdi stated the sonata might be performed without the vocal cantus firmus line.

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The Chôros No. 4 (1926) by the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) is far removed in both space and time from the preceding music for brass on tonight's program. Villa-Lobos conceived the genre "chôros" as modeled after a popular Brazilian dance form and applied the title to works as different as a piano solo (No. 5) and a large work for chorus, band, and orchestra (No. 14). Although he championed the ideal of a purely Brazilian music, Villa-Lobos was eclectic by nature, and his more than two thousand works embrace idioms from a wide variety of sources. The Chôros No. 4 is made of episodes ranging from a nocturne-like lyricism to the sounds of a street band, playing intricate cross-rhythms suggestive of the rich multi-cultural Brazilian folk musical heritage.

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Violet Archer has made major contributions to the musical life of Canada both as a composer and as a teacher. For the past ten years, she has been at the University of Alberta, and last year she received an honorary doctorate from McGill University in recognition of her achievements as one of the foremost of Canadian composers. She is presently on sabbatical from the University, devoting the year to various projects including the composition of her first opera.

The Cantata Sacra, one of Dr. Archer's major works, was composed in the fall of 1966 on a commission from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the Centennial Year. It was first performed on the C.B.C. network from Winnipeg in March of 1967. The cantata is subtitled "A Sacred Meditation on Late Mediaeval Dialogues." The composer has written the following note: "The work is scored for five singers and for flute, clarinet, horn and trumpet, violin, viola, cello, double bass, and piano. The singers are heard both as soloists and in ensemble. The libretto was compiled from a wide collection of late mediaeval dialogues submitted to me by the C.B.C. The plainsong, Christe qui lux es et dies, heard only twice throughout the composition — at the end of the third and last movements — is woven into the whole of the composition from beginning to end and becomes part of my personal style in this composition. I have aimed at simplicity and directness in order to produce music appropriate to the style of the words. All Latin quotations are a part of the given texts."

—W. K.